

Swine Influenza A Information for Schools
INTERIM SCHOOL HEALTH ADVISORY

4-28-09

The State of Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) would like to provide information to school districts about the recently reported cases of a novel influenza virus, *swine flu*, identified in the U.S. and other countries. The guidance provided here will give you some basic information about swine flu and list additional resources so that you can stay current on this evolving issue. For information about swine flu, visit the Connecticut Flu Watch web site at www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/swineflu or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/swineflu. This site will be updated as new information becomes available. A fact sheet from CDC, *Key Facts about Swine Influenza*, is attached for your review. In addition, a one-page fact sheet, *Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs* that can be distributed to students, staff and parents, is also attached. It may also be helpful to post this information at sites around school buildings.

General Information:

- Swine Influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by type A influenza viruses that causes regular outbreaks in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Swine flu viruses have been reported to spread from people-to-people, however, at this time, it is not known how easily the virus spreads between people.
- Swine influenza viruses are not transmitted by food. You cannot get swine influenza from eating pork or pork products.
- There is no vaccine available at this time to protect against swine flu.
- To help prevent the transmission of swine flu, good health and hygiene practices are essential. These include:
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If water is not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used.
 - Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (if a tissue is not available, the crook of the arm). Carefully dispose of the tissues in a wastebasket, and then wash your hands.
 - Do not share drinking cups or food.
- Additional information on preventing the spread of germs is available at:
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/>
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/stopgerms.htm>
- Staff and students that have recently traveled to an area with confirmed cases of swine flu and do not have any symptoms **do not** need to be excluded from school or the childcare setting. For an updated listing of areas that have confirmed cases of swine flu see the DPH or CDC websites at www.cdc.gov/swineflu and www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/swineflu.

School Closures

- Dismissal of students (closing schools) should be strongly considered in schools with a confirmed or a suspected case linked to a confirmed case.
- If the school dismisses students or childcare facilities close, schools should also cancel all school or childcare related gatherings and encourage parents and students to avoid congregating outside of the school.
- Schools and childcare facilities should dismiss students for a time period to be evaluated on an ongoing basis depending on additional confirmed or suspected cases.
- Schools and childcare facilities should consult with their local or state health departments for guidance on reopening. If no additional confirmed or suspected cases are identified among students (or school-based personnel) for a period of seven (7) days, schools may consider reopening.
- Schools and childcare facilities in unaffected areas should begin to prepare for the possibility of school dismissal or childcare facility closure. This includes asking teachers, parents and officials in charge of critical school-associated programs (such as meal services) to make contingency plans.

Symptoms of swine flu

The symptoms of swine flu in humans are similar to the symptoms of seasonal flu.

They include:

- Fever,
- Cough,
- Sore throat,
- Diarrhea, and
- Vomiting.

To prevent the spread of influenza in the childcare/school setting:

- First, and most importantly, remind parents and enforce policies regarding having ill children stay at home during their illness. If they have influenza they will need to stay home for at least seven days after the illness started or at least two (2) days after symptoms have disappeared, whichever is longer
- If a child becomes ill, the child should be evaluated by their health care provider especially if they traveled to an area with confirmed cases of swine flu.
- Remind and inform staff to remain home while ill.
- Review your school's plans for responding to outbreaks of respiratory illness, including influenza outbreaks, and ensure that they include current information.
- Review and implement CDC's *Guidelines and Recommendations for Preventing the Spread of Influenza (the Flu) in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff* at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/childcaresettings.htm>.
- Make sure staff are familiar with the above guidelines and that they are being implemented in your school.
- Provide information to parents on steps that can be taken to prevent flu. (See attached fact sheet, *Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs.*)

- Monitor the postings on the state DPH and CDC web sites about swine flu to see if child care facilities need to take additional actions.
- Remind staff and parents to not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children or teenagers with fever who have the flu. This can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome.

Additional information on preventing the spread of influenza can be found at:
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/preschool.html>.

For generic information on disaster preparedness, see NACCRRA's web site
http://www.naccrra.org/for_parents/coping/disaster.php

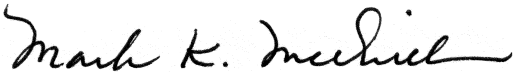
Additional resources for schools and childcare settings, including Connecticut pandemic influenza planning materials can be found at:
<http://www.ct.gov/ctfluwatch/cwp/view.asp?a=2533&Q=314858>.

Additional generic planning information for schools and childcare settings, including examples of state and local plans, can be found on the Department of Education's website at: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/index.html>.



J. Robert Galvin, M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., Commissioner
Connecticut State Department of Public Health

Date: April 28, 2009



Mark K. McQuillan, Commissioner
Connecticut State Department of Education

Date: April 28, 2009

Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs

Fact Sheet

1.Avoid close contact.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

2.Stay home when you are sick.

Stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. Keep sick children at home. You will help prevent others from catching the illness.

3.Cover your mouth and nose.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

4.Wash your hands often.

Washing your hands and the hands of your children often will help protect you from germs.

5.Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

6.Practice other good health habits.

Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.